

commission, had been for some time perambulating the country, no action was taken against his followers in the year 1381. It was thought, indeed, by orthodox clergy that the Archbishop ought to institute proceedings against those who publicly impugned the doctrine of Transubstantiation; but Sudbury, to whom vigorous action of any sort was distasteful, and persecution abhorrent, had neglected or refused to move in the matter. By the next generation, which saw the spread of Lollardry, he was bitterly blamed for not seizing the occasion to nip heresy in the bud. Even his death at the hands of the Kentish rebels had not atoned for this gentle fault.<sup>1</sup> His successor Courtenay was a man cast in a very different mould. The new Primate had, as Bishop of London, taken the principal part in Wycliffe's trial at St. Paul's, and had again and again forced Sudbury to throw off his lethargy and stand up for the rights of the Church. He was a born persecutor, and he came into office at a time favourable to his genius. The Parliament, which sat from November '81 to the following February, had been too busy with the work of pacifying the country to listen to him ; but when the next assembled in May he appealed to it for help. The season was opportune, for the Peasants' Revolt had frightened the ruling classes out of all designs against ecclesiastical property, and the blood of Sudbury the Primate-Chancellor had sealed a Holy Alliance between Church and State, between the King and the Lords on the one hand and the Bishops on the other. John of Gaunt's policy of aggression towards clerical wealth and privilege, though mildly supported by Court and nobility, had been moribund ever since the Parliament of Gloucester in 1378. The Peasants' Revolt killed it altogether. The design of confiscation was sometimes taken up by the House of Commons, but King and Lords henceforth befriended the Church until the age of the Tudors. Courtenay was able to rely on the secular arm in his attack on heresy. The power of the Crown, which had successfully defended Wycliffe on two former occasions, now lent its aid to crush his followers.

Although this change of policy was  
largely due to the

<sup>1</sup> Wals., ii. 11-2.